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Decentralization in East-Central Europe Operationalization, Taxonomy and its Impact on Local Political Elites' Outlook¹

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INTRODUCTION

The *problématique* of the decentralization of public services towards the local communities has represented a perennial preoccupation on the agenda and within the programmes of the post-communist governments, while its legislative realization and, further, the implementation of such a policy have generated remarkably diverse – here and there, controversial – outcomes: on the one hand, observers and decision-makers praise the benefits of “local autonomy” and independent public policy at the local level, accompanied by a more meaningful citizens’ participation, on the other hand, contestations are voiced through the prism of what is seemed to be a gradual “impoverishment” of the small-to-medium sized municipalities, in the absence of the financial support provided by the state budget.

The question of decentralization is much more conspicuous in periods of crisis, as it puts a considerable pressure on the financial situation of the local communities which, in a decentralized and devoluted administrative system – hence in the absence of the significant sums recouped from the state budget –, find themselves forced to collect appreciable taxes in the local budget from a population increasingly impoverished by the effects of economic fluctuations. In this sense, the degree of *de facto* decentralization is probably the most relevantly illustrated by the average proportion from the local budget of all the administrative-territorial units on the area of a state, ensured out of its own, independent sources, by the municipalities themselves: within those states with a decentralized administrative tradition, the budgetary proportion resulting from the collection of taxes from within the local community can constitute up to 60% of the total of the municipality’s budgetary revenues (e.g. Poland); on the

¹ This paper is part of the doctoral thesis entitled *A Descriptive Inquiry into the Local Political Elites of East-Central Europe. A Comparative Approach of Tecuci (Romania), Česká Lípa (the Czech Republic), Oleśnica (Poland), Gyula (Hungary), Levice (the Slovak Republic), and Targovishte (Bulgaria)*, publicly defended in November 2016.

other hand, in countries administratively centralized, the municipalities are exposing serious problems in the management of local finances, collecting under 30% of the budgetary revenues, while the rest of the income emanates from the state budget. This is the case of Romania as well, where the successive attempts of decentralization failed to prepare the small communities (i.e. the communes, the small-to-medium sized towns) in efficiently collecting and effectively administering the local taxes. Meanwhile, after the 1989 *momentum*, the local communities have been entrusted with increasingly broad administrative attributions (e.g. the administration of schools and hospitals, the management of public security, social welfare, etc.), without the improvement of the capacity of collecting taxes in an autonomous fashion.

Such municipalities confronted an impoverishment of the local political elites' abilities to initiate and implement local development projects (particularly, in the sphere of infrastructural development and of economic growth through investments and attraction of private capital); such a circumstance has the unfortunate "merit" to constitute itself into a fertile soil for unprofitable public vendue, for the exercise of personal influences at the local level, for corruption and the perpetuation of "patron-client"-styled relations².

In this context, the present paper attempts to address the puzzle of (re)defining and operationalizing the notion of "decentralization", and to further discuss the impact of this process, in practice, on the outlook of the local decision-makers. As will be shown in the following sections, there has been a general neglect in the literature regarding the effects of decentralization on local leadership in the still young democracies of East-Central Europe, the focus being shifted instead towards infant democracies outside Europe (China, India, Latin America, etc.).

THEORETICAL DISCUSSIONS ON THE CONCEPT OF "DECENTRALIZATION"

"Administrative decentralization" points to "the existence of some local public persons, appointed by the territory's community, with their own attributions, who directly intervene in the management and the administration of the community's problems, including *local autonomy*"³, a definition which poses the problem of the degree of decentralization that is actually favourable to

² Cf. Anna Grzymała-Busse, *Rebuilding Leviathan: Party Competition and State Exploitation in Post-Communist Democracies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK) & New York, 2007.

³ Dana Apostol Tofan, *Drept administrativ*, ed. a 2-a, rev., vol. I, C.H. Beck, București, 2008, pp. 253-255.

a democratic construct and to an efficient administration, considering different factors (e.g. the traditions and the history, the area and the population of the state, the dispersion degree of the inhabitants, the economic conditions and the political context, etc.).

Equally dilemmatic remains also the convenient operationalization of the concept of “decentralization”. Adverting on the major discrepancies between “administrative decentralization” and “political decentralization”⁴, from a legal perspective, Dana Apostol Tofan⁵ distinguishes between (a) “territorial decentralization”, i.e. “the existence of some elected authorities, at the level of the territorial-administrative units, authorities that dispose of general material competence”, and (b) “technical decentralization” or “decentralization through services”, i.e. “the existence of some moral persons of public law, that perform specific public services, distinct from the bulk of public services provided for by the state authorities”.

All these developments and dynamics are primarily elite-generated, but, in turn, they tend to lead to important changes in the local elites’ outlook, strategy prioritization, value orientation, and attitudes⁶. Moreover, different degrees of decentralization and diverse forms of decentralized policies are prone to determine variations in the local elites’ profile, behaviour or attitudinal patterns⁷. Conversely, Paul Carnegie contends that, generally, structural and “institutional reform requires a modification of elite behaviour, however slightly”⁸.

Concretely, decentralization needs the simultaneous fulfilment of the following prerequisites: the existence of a local community with its own necessary material means (i.e. a local budget), the existence of local decision-making bodies elected by the community (not by the central authorities, which

⁴ Understood as federalism – “the most profound form of decentralization”, a “major constitutional option, often associated to some exceptional historical circumstances”. For more details on this topic, see Xavier Frège, *La decentralization*, Éditions La Découverte, Paris, 1986, p. 38.

⁵ Dana Apostol Tofan, *Drept administrativ*, cit., p. 255.

⁶ Subrata K. Mitra, “Room to Maneuver in the Middle: Local Elites, Political Action, and the State in India”, *World Politics*, vol. 43, no. 3, April 1991, pp. 390-413; A.M.M. Shawkat-Ali, “Decentralization for Development: Experiment in Local Government Administration in Bangladesh”, *Asian Survey*, vol. 27, no. 7, July 1987, pp. 787-799; Robert L. Crain, Donald B. Rosenthal, “Structure and Values in Local Political Systems: The Case of Fluoridation Decisions”, *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 28, no. 1, February 1966, pp. 169-195.

⁷ Douglas T. Yates, *Neighborhood Democracy: The Politics and Impacts of Decentralization*, Lexington Books, Lexington (Massachusetts), 1973.

⁸ Paul J. Carnegie, “Democratization and Decentralization in Post-Soeharto Indonesia: Understanding Transition Dynamics”, *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 81, no. 4, Winter 2008/2009, pp. 515-525/p. 518.

otherwise exert some sort of administrative endorsement for the limit between local problems and those of general interests not to be breached)⁹.

The different types of decentralization bear as *fundamenta* different criteria: organizationally, (1) “vertical” (“the power dispersion to bottom on the chain of authority”), and (2) “horizontal” (“the transfer of some responsibilities to particular organizations outside the central administrative structure”); structurally, (1) “functional” (“the recognition of some autonomy of the institutions and public services situated at the local level”), and (2) “territorial” (“the recognition of some autonomy of the local communities” *per se*). Generally, decentralization is defined as comprising two steps¹⁰: (a) “de-concentration” (in its turn, being either of “vertical structure”, with an “unintegrated local administration”, or of “prefectorial structure”, with an “integrated local administration”), and (b) “devolution” (“the power transfer from the central government to the regional institutions”, as an intermediary stage between the central governance and the local one. Devolution can be either “administrative” (“the regional institutions only implement the policies decided upon at the centre”), or “legislative” (i.e. “the establishment of elected regional assemblies, invested with political responsibilities and with a certain fiscal independence, a situation which confer them a high degree of manoeuvre and decision-making in their area of responsibility”)¹¹.

Most recently, Jean-Paul Faguet¹² refers to “decentralization” from two dimensions, bearing in mind the example of Bolivia:

“First, it [decentralization] encompasses reforms such as deconcentration, devolution, and delegation that in incentive terms are fundamentally different [...]. Second, the word conceals great variation in the extent to which reform is effectively implemented across different countries”¹³.

Similarly to Triesman¹⁴, in a well-documented contribution on the evolution of the concept, Pollitt¹⁵ presents a quite rich typology of decentralization, which contains, most notably, the distinctions between (a)

⁹ James W. Fesler, “Centralization and Decentralization”, in David L. Sills, Robert K. Merton (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 2, Macmillan & Free Press, New York & London, 1968, pp. 370-379.

¹⁰ Virgil Stoica, *Cine conduce Iașul ?*, Editura Fundației AXIS, Iași, 2003, pp. 65-66.

¹¹ Andrew Heywood, *Politics*, Macmillan, London, 1997.

¹² Jean-Paul Faguet, *Decentralization and Popular Democracy: Governance from Below in Bolivia*, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (Michigan), 2012.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ Daniel Triesman, *Defining and Measuring Decentralization: A Global Perspective* (UCLA manuscript), Department of Political Science, University of California at Los Angeles, Los Angeles (California), 2002, pp. 1-38, available at: www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/treisman/Papers/defin.pdf, accessed on 10.06.2017.

¹⁵ Christopher Pollitt, “Decentralization: A Central Concept in Contemporary Public Management”, in Ewan Ferlie, Laurence E. Lynn, Christopher Pollitt (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Public Management*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, pp. 371-397.

“competitive” (i.e. authority parcelled out on the basis of competition) *versus* “non-competitive” decentralization (i.e. authority parcelled out on the basis of allocation); (b) “internal” (i.e. “authority parcelled out within an existing organization”) *versus* “external” decentralization or “devolution” (i.e. “authority transferred to other [possibly new] organizations”)¹⁶.

There is a constant concern within the literature regarding the new administrative developments, especially decentralization, and their impact on the outlook and orientations of the local/regional political elite. Such a concern has been focused primarily on Latin America, South Asia¹⁷, and Africa¹⁸, while the topic has been generally neglected for the developing democracies of East-Central Europe.

Dora Orlansky¹⁹ discusses the impact of decentralization upon the power-sharing between the central and the local administrative layers and upon the extent of political power and responsibility local elites are expected to exert. Discussing a series of examples from Africa and South Asia, Devarajan *et al.*²⁰ refer to the dangers of elite isolation with the increase in decentralized communities and to shifts in delivery of public services once with the process of

¹⁶ Christopher Pollitt, “Decentralization...cit.”, p. 375.

¹⁷ Victoria A. Beard, Faranak Miraftab, Christopher Silver (eds.), *Planning and Decentralization: Contested Spaces for Public Action in the Global South*, Routledge, London & New York, 2008; Paul J. Smoke, Eduardo J. Gómez, George E. Peterson (eds.), *Decentralization in Asia and Latin America: Towards a Comparative Interdisciplinary Perspective*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham Glos (UK) & Northampton (Massachusetts), 2006; Shahid Javed Burki, Guillermo E. Perry, William R. Dillinger (eds.), *Beyond the Center: Decentralizing the State*, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., 1999; Maria Escobar-Lemmon, “Political Support for Decentralization: An Analysis of the Colombian and Venezuelan Legislatures”, *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 47, no. 4, October 2003, pp. 683-697; Pranab Bardhan, “Decentralization of Governance and Development”, *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 16, no. 4, Fall 2002, pp. 185-205; Christopher Garman, Stephan Haggard, Eliza Willis, “Fiscal Decentralization: A Political Theory with Latin American Cases”, *World Politics*, vol. 53, no. 2, January 2001, pp. 205-236; Tulia G. Falletti, “A Sequential Theory of Decentralization: Latin American Cases in Comparative Perspective”, *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 99, no. 3, August 2005, pp. 327-346, etc.

¹⁸ Clement Cottingham, “Political Consolidation and Centre-Local Relations in Senegal”, *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, vol. 4, no.1, Special Issue: “Local-Central Politics”, Winter 1970, pp. 101-120.

¹⁹ Dora Orlansky, “Decentralization Politics and Policies”, in Stuart S. Nagel (ed.), *Critical Issues in Cross-national Public Administration: Privatization, Democratization, Decentralization*, Greenwood Publishing, Westport (Connecticut), 2000, pp. 181-204/p. 196.

²⁰ Shantayanan Devarajan, Stuti Khemani, Shekhar Shah, “The Politics of Partial Decentralization”, in Ahmad Ehtisham, Giorgio Brosio (eds.), *Does Decentralization Enhance Service Delivery and Poverty Reduction ?*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham Glos (UK) & Northampton (Massachusetts), 2009, pp. 102-121/pp. 118-119.

decentralization. Quite interestingly, Merilee S. Grindle²¹ introduces the example of decentralization in Mexico, concluding that proper fiscal and administrative decentralization can result in high levels of political competition and satisfaction with the living in the town, both at the level of the local elites and the community. It becomes apparent that local leadership modifies its outlook and prioritization strategy in the context of change of administrative organization leading to increased decentralization. Jonathan Rodden²² presents the impact of different forms of decentralization upon the city management, but, most importantly, upon the degree of elite isolation and passive representation. Finally, opposing two main approaches with reference to the impact of decentralization policies – the “liberal-individualist” and “statist” approaches –, Aylin Topal²³ describes forms of elite isolation after the proper implementation of decentralization policies and differences of agenda setting of local elites as response to increased decentralization. The fashion in which the elites’ outlook, value orientation and strategy prioritization actually modifies is partially elaborated in the present paper, with a special focus on particular municipalities in three countries of East-Central Europe: Romania, Czech Republic, and Poland.

THE LEVEL OF DECENTRALIZATION IN ECE COUNTRIES AND ITS IMPACT ON LOCAL LEADERSHIP: A DISCUSSION

As a repercussion of the implementation of decentralization policies, the role, the prerogatives, and the attributions of the Municipal Councils and of the institution of the mayor increase exponentially. Therefore, the local political elite of decentralized communities are subject to the new context presupposed by decentralization, and they changed accordingly. The distribution and the amplitude of attributions at the local level, related to the central authority, should also be considered in the discussion regarding the typology of local government systems and these systems’ impact on elite outlook and attitude orientation. Such typologies have been instrumentally utilized by the literature for the purpose of explaining differences in

²¹ Merilee Serrill Grindle, *Going Local. Decentralization, Democratization and the Promise of Good Governance*, Princeton University Press, Princeton (New Jersey), 2007, pp. 63-105.

²² Jonathan Rodden, “Comparative Federalism and Decentralization: On Meaning and Measurement”, *Comparative Politics*, vol. 36, no. 4, July 2004, pp. 481-500.

²³ Aylin Topal, *Boosting Competitiveness Through Decentralization. Subnational Comparison of Local Development in Mexico*, Ashgate, Farnham Surrey (UK) & Burlington (Vermont), 2012.

“recruitment patterns, professionalization, the position of mayors in local and multi-level governance arrangements (or horizontal and vertical policy networks), the interpretation (or notion) of democracy, problem definition as well as attitudes and opinions towards decentralization or centralization and reforms (‘modernization’) of the public sector (‘new public management’)”²⁴.

This is particularly the reason why a short inquiry into the taxonomical diversity of local government systems is perceived as necessary at this point (see Table 2).

In the existing literature, the *de facto* degree of decentralization has been measured employing a series of complementary indicators: (1) the level of proclivity towards decentralization²⁵; (2) the share of sub-national government to the public consumption or to the GDP level²⁶; (3) other qualitative indicators, such as: government credibility, social capital²⁷, soft or hard budget constraints²⁸, levels of corruption, administrative capacity²⁹, the magnitude of bureaucracy, etc.

The *de facto* degree of decentralization and its effective measurement represent a cumbersome topic for both political scientists and policy-drafters. Thus, besides the pieces of legislation establishing the functioning of the mechanisms presupposed by the said administrative process, additional markers and indicators should be equally considered, in order to determine the manner and the extent in which the legal framework is put into practice, is implemented and developed in the field. Probably the most commonly employed form of operationalizing the concept of “decentralization” is the one currently utilized

²⁴ Hubert Heinelt, Nikolaos-K. Hlepas, “Typologies of Local Government Systems”, in Henry Bäck, Hubert Heinelt, Annick Magnier (eds.), *The European Mayor. Political Leaders in the Changing Context of Local Democracy*, VS Verlag Für Sozialwissenschaften (Urban and Regional Research International), Wiesbaden & Berlin, 2006, pp. 21-42.

²⁵ Jonathan Dunn, Deborah Wetzel, “Fiscal Decentralization in Former Socialist Economies: Progress and Prospects”, in *Proceedings. Annual Conference on Taxation and Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the National Tax Association. Atlanta (Georgia), Sunday 24th to Tuesday 26th October 1999*, vol. 92, National Tax Association, Washington, D.C., 2000, pp. 242-250.

²⁶ International Monetary Fund – IMF, *Government Finance Statistics Yearbook*, IMF, Washington, D.C., 2001.

²⁷ Luiz De Mello, *Can Fiscal Decentralization Strengthen Social Capital?*, IMF Working Paper No. 129, Washington, D.C., 2000.

²⁸ János Kornai, “Resource-Constrained versus Demand-Constrained Systems”, *Econometrica*, vol. 47, no. 4, July 1979, pp. 801-819; *Idem*, *Economics of Shortage*, North-Holland, Amsterdam (the Netherlands), 1980; *Idem*, “The Soft Budget Constraint”, *Kyklos*, vol. 39, no. 1, February 1986, pp. 3-30.

²⁹ John J. Gargan, “Consideration of Local Government Capacity”, *Public Administration Review*, vol. 41, no. 6, November/December 1981, pp. 649-658.

by the World Bank and the IMF in the issuing of their annual reports³⁰ (See Table 1).

Table 1

**The Proportion of Subnational Share of General Government Expenditure
(Expressed As Percentage From the Total National Budget)**

	Public order & Safety	Education	Health	Social Security & Welfare	Housing & Communal Amenities	Recreation & Culture	Transportation & Communication	Average
BULGARIA	2.17	59.53	44.11	8.30	68.95	26.69	12.19	31.70%
CZECH REPUBLIC	17.20	17.22	5.98	8.03	68.47	61.89	46.53	32.18%
HUNGARY	6.86	46.99	44.83	11.99	74.10	43.97	27.64	36.62%
POLAND	34.30	72.47	87.36	17.49	86.92	76.13	65.34	62.85%
ROMANIA	4.80	9.23	0.36	2.97	83.01	34.74	17.55	21.80%
SLOVAKIA	5.69	2.40	0.26	0.49	56.74	27.00	18.78	15.90%

Source: International Monetary Fund, Government Finance Statistics Yearbook, IMF, Washington, D.C., 2001.

The data is selected only for the countries of East-Central Europe, former satellites of USSR.

METHODOLOGY: APPLICATIONS ON THREE CASE-STUDIES

The present study bears, as its prime scope, the exemplification of the theoretical considerations discussed above, regarding the level of decentralization of the administrations of the East-central European states, and their impact upon the outlook of the local political elites. This paper's intention is to contribute to the existing literature and provide information regarding the modification in elite outlook and attitudinal patterns after a decentralization policy was implemented and has produced its effects. For achieving its objective, the present endeavour employs the positional approach in identifying and analyzing the local political elites, alongside the case-study as the main research method, using as populations the members of the Municipal/Local

³⁰ Along a series of domains of considerable interest at the local level (infrastructure, education, healthcare, public security, transportation, social services [including housing and unemployment relief], cultural and recreational activities, etc.), it evaluates the extent to which they are dealt with nationally, regionally and locally. This evaluation is constructed primarily based on pieces of legislation, bylaws, internal regulations of different administrative and executive bodies, as well as on some empirical endeavours undertaken by the World Bank and the IMF expertise.

Councils in three small-to-medium sized towns (approximately 35,000 inhabitants), similar in terms of developmental strategies (i.e. food industry and service development, with commercial dominant), localized in three countries of the region: Tecuci (Galați county, Romania), Česká Lípa (Liberec region, the Czech Republic), and Oleśnica (Lower Silesia voivodeship, Poland)³¹.

For the purpose of accounting of differences in elite outlook, interactions, attitude orientation varying upon different forms and levels of decentralization, the paper assumes that the fashion in which the concept of “decentralization” is operationalized and instrumentalized in studies concerning

³¹ Employing the most similar design systems, the selection of the cases follows a certain pattern determined by the accessibility of the populations under scrutiny and by this researcher’s capacities and capabilities in respect to the populations. The study has been initiated in Tecuci (December 2010), the author’s hometown, the place in which the capacity of reaching the subjects of this endeavor is considerable, while the accessibility of documents resulting from the daily activity of the Local Council increases significantly. Subsequently, the decision was made to embark on a comparative approach (July-August 2011), stationed on the region of East-Central Europe, with the next Municipal Council inquired to be that of one town located in the Czech Republic, since the country – though sharing with Romania the experience of almost half-a-century of state socialism, the repertoire of problems the democratic transition and market economy immanently trigger, and confronting the same general paradigm of “East-Central Europeaness” – has positioned itself, during the years following the communist breakdown, better politically and economically, as compared to Romania, hence bearing elites who have more comprehensively internalized the democratic values, norms and “rules of the game”. The selection of the town of Česká Lípa among the Czech towns was partly the result of random convenience sampling, based, firstly, on the selection of those towns in the Czech Republic comprising 30,000-42,000 inhabitants and basing its economic developmental strategy on agro-alimentary industry and trade, commercial activities (i.e. the two main characteristics of Tecuci to be primarily isolated in other cases); twenty-two towns fitted this initial profile. Secondly, e-mails were sent to the Mayor’s Office, the Information Office, and to the municipal councilors of each of the initially selected towns; the e-mails contained a short presentation of the research and its results on Tecuci, the proposal for collaboration to the research, by the filling in of the questionnaire attached and the access to the Municipal Council’s documents, and the motivation of taking into consideration the said towns. This approach resulted in responses received from four communities: the collaboration in the view of answering the questionnaire and providing the necessary documents was possible and continued with the representatives of the municipality of Česká Lípa. The Polish case was considered differently: the town of Oleśnica and its Municipal Council have been chosen due to their proximity to the city of Wrocław, where this researcher spent the period September 2012-February 2013. The populations on which the questionnaire was administered counted: 19 local councilors for Tecuci, 25 municipal councils for Česká Lípa, and 21 municipal councilors for Oleśnica. The similarity of the three cases, in terms of demographics and developmental strategies, was perceived as paramount for the study, regardless of the fact that rejoinders would arise from the degree of representativeness of the three towns for their own country. On the other hand, indeed, the representativeness of each town for its country might significantly impact on the very agenda setting and on the decisions on development strategies.

the “local-central” relations has been frequently founded on a *de jure*, rather legalist, perspective. Undoubtedly, the legislation represents an important indicator for establishing a series of traits or different levels of decentralization to be subsequently identified and measured throughout the region. Nevertheless, the legislation in each case has presented and continues to present significant contingencies in actual implementation, triggered mainly by the autonomous administration of local finances. The present paper employs the World Bank/IMF averages indexes of sub-national share of general government expenditure in the operationalization of “decentralization” (See Table 1); the paper adds to these indexes three thresholds: (a) a significant level of administrative and fiscal decentralization describes the countries whose average sub-national share of general government expenditure is higher than 50%; (b) a standard level of decentralization is specific for those countries with an average local and regional share of general government expenditure higher than 30%, but lower than 50%; and (c) a low level of decentralization characterizes the countries with a sub-national share of general government expenditure lower than 30%³².

With the assistance of a pre-eminently quantitative research (the administration of a written questionnaire), and qualitative one, as well (document analysis on the national pieces of legislation and on the Councils’ decisions, participative observation), considerations have been detailed regarding: (a) the local elites’ interactions with other groups, and (b) the perceptions towards key-aspects of the consolidating democracies of the region: decentralization and local autonomy, the level of satisfaction as one of the inhabitants of the town.

Therefore, the main research question of the study is:

What is the impact of the specific level of decentralization in each country on the outlook and priorities of the local political elites in the three cases?

From the utilization of the specific research methods, a series of tendencies are observable, which the present study associates and correlates with the degree of administrative decentralization of the three systems of local government discussed here³³. From the analysis of the chosen cases, the hypotheses are the following:

³² The thresholds were established taking into consideration the average index of decentralization for the region of East-Central Europe (33%): an average, standard level of decentralization would be placed around the value of 30% of the budget expenditure as sub-national share. Equally, a sub-national share of the total budget expenditure that is exceeding 50% is to be considered significant, high.

³³ Cf. Roxana Marin, “Instances of Decentralization in East-Central Europe: Operationalization, Taxonomy and Applications on Local Political Elites’ Outlook”, *Romanian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 14, no. 2, Winter 2014, pp. 99-125; *Idem*, “Democratic Elitism at the Local Level and Local Governance in East-Central Europe. A Comparative Assessment on the Elites of Tecuci (Romania), Česká Lípa (the Czech

Hypothesis 1: The more significant the level of decentralization, the more isolated the local political elite becomes. Thus, it establishes preponderantly local relations, and closes its access to the central administration/elite, while presenting a higher degree of localism in cultural-geographical identification.

Hypothesis 2: The higher the level of decentralization in the system of local government, the more reserved, realistic the attitude manifested by the local political elites towards the benefits of the decentralization *panacea*.

Hypothesis 3: The higher the level of decentralized administration, the more satisfied the political elite feels as inhabiting the town which it represents.

RESULTS

*Hypothesis 1: A Localized and Isolated Political Elite*³⁴

It is important to note that the local elite of Oleśnica – the most decentralized community – is the most localized group, as compared to the other two cases, in terms of the networks of power and interactions with elite groups at the national level. None of the members of the Municipal Council of Oleśnica establishes contacts with members of the central administration; only 2.63%³⁵ of the respondents in the Polish case have interactions with political representatives at the level of the voievodship (regional). The frequency of interactions with other local elected officials is similar: 2.63% of the councilors in Oleśnica establish such relations, the lowest percentage among the three

Republic) and Oleśnica (Poland)”, in Stelian Scăunaș, Vasile Tabără, Eugen Străuțiu (eds.), *Political Science, International Relations and Security Studies. International Conference Proceedings, the VIIth Edition, Sibiu, 24-26 May 2013*, Department of International Relations, Political Science and Security Studies (Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities), “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu, Sibiu, 2013, pp. 29-56; *Idem*, “Incomplete Modernization and State Socialism in East-Central Europe. A Framework of Analysis of Post-Communist Local Political Elites”, in Daniel Dumitran, Valer Moga (eds.), *Economy and Society in Central and Eastern Europe: Territory, Population, Consumption. Papers of the International Conference Held in Alba Iulia, April 25th-27th, 2013*, LIT Verlag, Wien, Zürich & Berlin & Münster, 2013, pp. 363-379.

³⁴ See Figure 1: *The Interactions of the Local Political Elites*, the comparative graphical representation of the results of the administered questionnaire (Q8) on the municipal councilors of the three communities.

³⁵ Although acknowledging the limitations sprung from the small number of units of analysis in the selected populations, the paper expresses the results of the administered questionnaire as percentages rather in order to illustrate trends and main orientations in the responses gathered than to assign clear statistical value.

cases analyzed: 11.11% in the case of Česká Lípa and a more robust 19.51% in Tecuci.

Overall, the members of the Municipal Council in Oleśnica are the most isolated group in terms of the networks of power and elite interactions, hence being the most circumscribed elite group among the three cases, only 5.26% of the local councilors establishing contacts with other groups transcending the limits of their constituencies, as opposed to 31.68% for Tecuci and 12.69% for Česká Lípa.

The increased isolation with the Czech and the Polish local political elites is to be explained through the prism of the more and more significant degree of decentralization, hence confirming the first hypothesis: in both the Czech and the Polish cases, the local elite focuses primarily on the immediate issues their communities face, linking their interests to those of the groups acting within these communities, while the contacts with elites outside the town they represent become increasing sporadic and improbable. On the other hand, the most important relations the local political elite in Oleśnica entertains within the community are those with the neighborhood groups – 39.47% of the responses – and, more significantly, with the civic and reform groups – 21.05%. Comparably, the percentage – and thusly, the importance – assigned to the relations of elites with the neighborhood is the highest in the Polish case and, overall, the highest among all types of groups considered here and among all three cases, discrepantly higher as compared to the Romanian (12.19%) and the Czech (only 7.93%) cases, a situation which points to the closeness between the members of the Municipal Council and their immediate constituency.

Such type of relations, though they may appear trivial and insignificant in the entire political dynamic, bears a particular role especially in the process of re-election of the local leaders in small-to-medium communities, particularly in the case of extramural selection of elites, as it is the case of Polish local elites. Such an interaction is non-mediated, immediate and probably the simplest form the local leaders can establish with their constituency. The Polish local elite seem to have understood this key aspect the best. Regarding the local councillors' interaction with close friends and supporters, such contacts should be cumulatively discussed with those with the neighbourhood: 49.99% for Oleśnica, 29.26% for Tecuci and 20.62% for Česká Lípa.

To a considerable distance from the value assigned to the relation with the neighbourhood groups, the increased frequency of the links between the Council and the civic and reform groups represents a conspicuous and telling feature of good local governance and of democratic development at the community level: the Polish percentages in this area are similar to the Czech ones (21.05% to 25.39%) and dissimilar to the Romanian case (only 4.87% of the municipal councilors' contacts).

The repercussions of the dominance of those groups among the municipal councillors' links are twofold. On the one hand, the predominance of these connections suggests a profound isolation of the members of the Council to their immediate constituency, with the almost complete neglect of the networks of power at the central or regional level (possibly explainable through an increased degree of decentralization after 1998 that determined intrinsically a local elite more focused, almost circumscribed to the community they represent, due to the increased authority and capacity to actually implement changes, rather than pushing and negotiating for them with the central administration). It is among these groups that the Municipal Council extracts grievances, problems to be dealt with, issues to be solved. On the other hand, the conspicuous prominence of this type of contacts, rather informal and non-formalized, non-institutionalized, is prone to generate a general absence of *critique* in respect to the political performances of the municipal councillors and to bear the seeds of *phenomena* located at the margins of political structure – particularly recurrent in the political *compendium* offered by East-Central Europe –, such as patronage and clientelism. While, indeed, the growing frequency of relations with neighbourhood groups, with close friends and supporters is instrumental in taking the pulse of the local demands and expectations, these forms of interactions are, at the same time, unlikely to produce criticism directed towards the performances of the Municipal Council and, more often than not, the local councillor has to respond somehow to the unconditional help and support he receives from these groups, strategically placing individuals belonging to such groups within the local administration *apparatus*. Clientelistic practices of this fashion are rather commonplace for Tecuci, where the political elite largely coincides with the economic one; frequently, members of the parties represented in the Council are seen to colonize the local administration, generally undertaking petty jobs, but secured with the very incumbency of their “patrons” in the Council.

Expectedly, the “consensual” type of relations dominates among the interactions with close friends, supporters and neighbours. Yet another aspect appears problematic in this form of interaction: the 50% of the contacts with supporters, friends, sympathizers and alike is by no means compensated, counterbalanced by the poor 23.68% describing the frequency and importance of the contacts established by the councillors with two other groups, generally perceived to voice criticism towards the situation of the town, the situation of particular social groups in the composition of the town and towards the political performance of the local elite: the unions (2.63%)³⁶ and the civic and reform

³⁶ The very low frequency of interactions with the civic groups, but, more so, with the unions bears, actually, a twofold explanation. Part of the explanation lies in the very fact that unions and the civic groups are essentially weak at the local level, with virtually no voice and impact on policy making and agenda setting. For the endemic weakness of

groups (21.05%). Finally, the interactions with the business groups might constitute another source of “contestation” and criticism at the local level towards the political elite of the town. The political elite in Tecuci tends to confound itself with the economic one and the local leadership of Oleśnica is *quasi*-synonymous with particular segments of the civic and reform groups.

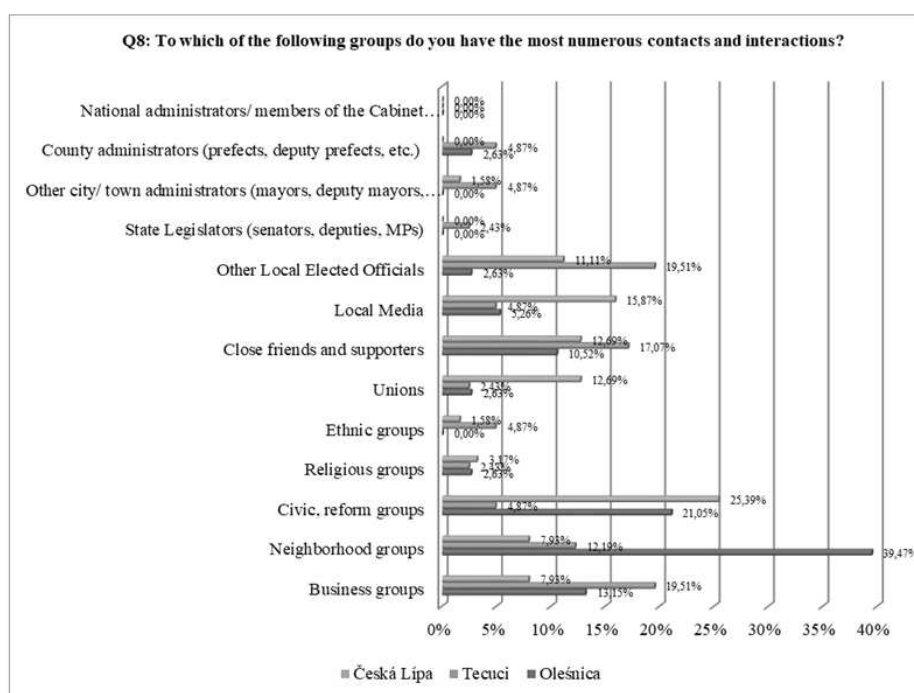


Figure 1. The Interactions of the Local Political Elites.

Source: Results of the administered questionnaire; author's own collected data.

The geographical identification of the local political elite³⁷ was considered in order to correlate it with the level of localism and isolation of the ruling groups of small-to-medium communities. Stronger links and power networks formed and maintained at the local level suggest localism and, subsequently, a more pronounced focus on the local priorities and, conversely, an isolation with respect to the national concerns. Similarly, it might be

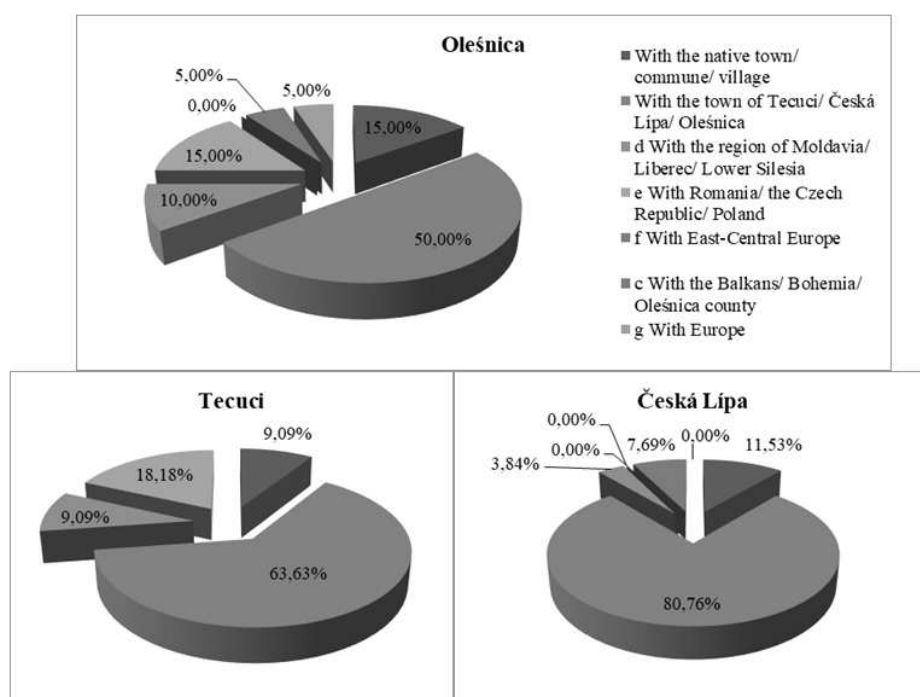
unions in Romania (and in East-Central Europe, generally), see: Georgeta Ghebrea, “Reinventing Trade Unions in Romania: Building Legitimacy in a Changing Society”, in Craig Phelan (ed.), *Trade Union Revitalisation: Trends and Prospects in 34 Countries*, Peter Lang, Bern, 2007, pp. 379-394.

³⁷ See Figures 2, 3, 4: *The Cultural-Geographical Identification of the Local Political Elites*, the comparative graphical representations of the results of the administered questionnaire (Q13) on the municipal councilors of the three towns.

hypothesized that a geographical identification inclined towards localism (i.e. the cases in which the local councillors identify primarily with their native municipalities, with the town they presently represent or with the region which they inhabit) is prone to generate an emphasis on local problems, perceived as taking precedence over the “national interests”. Considering these observations, the Municipal Council in Oleśnica expectedly exposes a high degree of localism, as 50% of the members of the Council identify first and foremost with the municipality they politically represent and govern, the town of Oleśnica; another 15% of the councilors bear a particular attachment towards the native town/village, thus making localism in geographical identification a characteristic pertaining to 65% of the Council. Regional identification³⁸ is featured by only 15% of the councilors. The national identification remains strong, even though hardly compensating for the powerful localism: 15% identify culturally and geographically primarily with Poland, considering the “national interests” taking precedence over the local ones. In comparison with the results for the Romanian and the Czech cases, the Polish case presents a more dispersed range of sources of identification, a multilayered and multifaceted one. At least six layers of geographical and cultural identification are acknowledged and given due consideration by the respondents: there are, firstly, a native source of identification, and a local *per se* identification; secondly, there are complementary, regional sources of identification, the county/province (the *powiat*), and the region (the *województwa*); thirdly, there is an almost inherent national source of identification; and fourthly, there is an additional “European identity”. The scheme appears significantly reduced, compressed, in the other two cases: in Tecuci, only four types of cultural-geographical identification are considered by the councilors (the native, the local, the regional and the national ones), while, in Česká Lípa, the matrix includes four sources as well, though slightly different from the ones considered in the case of Tecuci, due especially to different forms of administrative organization of the territory between the two (native, local, provincial, regional). Part of the discrepancies among the three cases in respect to the cultural-geographical identification springs from the very administrative arrangements of each country under scrutiny. But the differences lie also in the degree of openness each elite group inquired here actually display. Indeed, the level of localism is dominant for all cases, though quite dissimilar as numerical value: 65% in Oleśnica, 72.72% in Tecuci, 92.29% in Česká Lípa; it results that, as a matter of fact, the local elite in Oleśnica is the least isolated, which would, to a certain extent, stand against the isolation of the same group when

³⁸ The territorial-administrative division specific to the Polish administration, labeled *powiat* is somewhere in-between the municipality (the *gmina*), and the region (the *województwa*, the voivodship).

considering their overwhelmingly local connections and networks of power. Among the three Local Councils, the Romanian local elite is the more inclined towards a national identification (18.18%) in stark opposition to the Czech elite that acknowledged no such source of identification (testifying once more to the extremely localized character of the elite in Česká Lípa). All in all, the average level of localism among the three cases is 76.67%, that of regionalism amounts to 11.87% of the entire population comprised in the three Municipal Councils, while that of nationalism is 11.06%.



Figures 2, 3, 4. The Cultural-Geographical Identification of the Local Elite.
(Q13: Which of the cultural and territorial entities do you identify yourself with firstly?)
Source: Results of the administered questionnaire; author's own collected data.

Hypothesis 2: Attitudes Towards Decentralization

Measuring the perceptions of the local elite towards larger local autonomy and decentralization is instrumental because it provides an insight into the acknowledgement of various levels of authority in the leadership of the community. The largest *palette* of attributions belongs to the Municipal Council which undertakes the regulation tasks in most of the spheres of the community

life, including social services, public improvements, education, healthcare, cultural and recreation activities. Inversely, there is a side effect to a more comprehensive and extended decentralization: larger local autonomy and decentralization means primarily an effective say of the municipality on the local budget; as a consequence, it lies in the capacity of the local municipality to properly collect taxes and to efficiently administer the budgetary revenues thusly collected in order to actually effect changes in the various domains of competence under its direct supervision. With greater decentralization come greater authority and the ability to have a tremendous say in the conduct of the community's affairs, but, conversely, it also comes a great deal of responsibility in handling the ever-increasing problems the community confronts with. Balancing the advantages with the drawbacks of decentralization and autonomy at the local level, the members of the Municipal Council of Oleśnica position themselves somewhere in between the enthusiasm of the local elite in Tecuci (100% approval of greater decentralization, with a core of 64.7% approving and another 11.76% strongly approving decentralization) and the rather cautious pragmatism of the local elite in Česká Lípa (experienced in both the good points and the disadvantages decentralization presupposes, with 77.26% approving or partially approving and another 22.72% disagreeing with larger local autonomy and decentralization)³⁹. The Polish local political elite displays a sense of realism, properly understanding the mechanisms encapsulated by decentralizing a greater range of responsibilities in the local authority's sphere of competence, as 43.75% of the municipal councilors generally agree with decentralization. The acceptance of the Polish elites towards decentralization is significantly less than the case of Tecuci (64.70%), but slightly higher than the Czech case (40.9%). Relevant, as well, in Oleśnica, the municipal councilors display the highest proportion of strong acceptance of decentralization and the perspective of autonomous entities in the Polish administrative arrangement: 25% of the respondents, as opposed to none in the case of Česká Lípa and only 11.76% in the case of Tecuci. Decentralization worked its charms in Poland, while being partially contested in the Czech Republic and unaccomplished and high problematic in Romania. A very thin proportion of 6.25% of councilors in Oleśnica bluntly state that they disagree with the projects of decentralization and local autonomy, being largely disappointed with the feasibility and the efficiency of these projects; this disapproval is totally absent among the local councilors in Tecuci, but quite present among the councilors in Česká Lípa (22.72%). In Oleśnica, decentralization produced positive effects and a more suitable management at the local level; consequently, the attitudes of the local

³⁹ See Figure 5: *The Local Political Elites' Attitudes Towards Decentralization*, the comparative graphical representation of the results of the administered questionnaire (Q11) on the municipal councilors of the three towns.

elite towards it mirror generally the experience this elite has had with the reality of increased devolution and growing array of authority and responsibility.

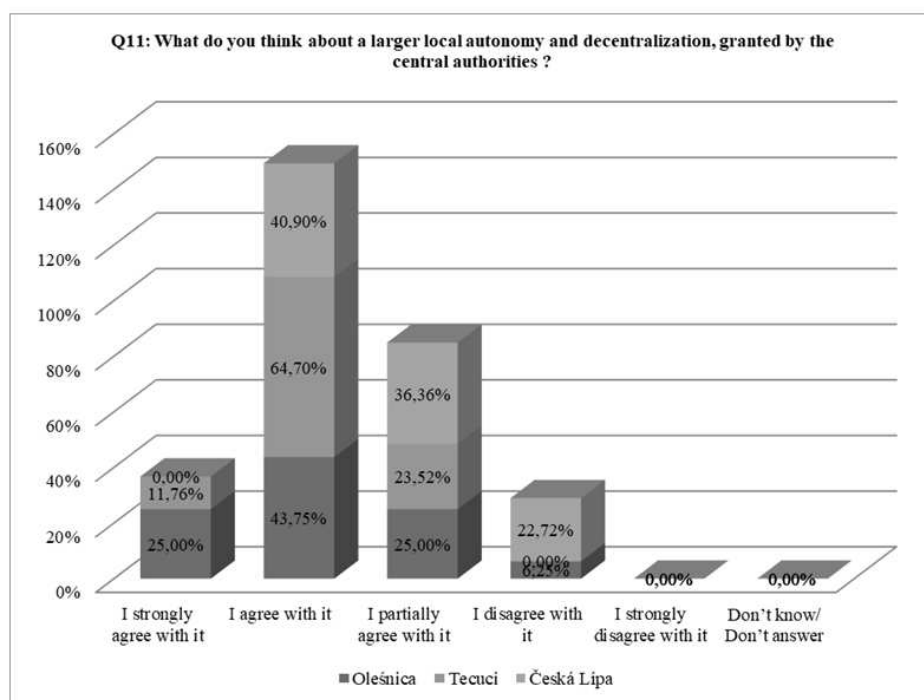


Figure 5. The Local Political Elites' Attitudes Towards Decentralization.
Source: Results of the administered questionnaire; author's own collected data.

Hypothesis 3: Satisfaction with the Life in the Town

The satisfaction of the municipal councillors of being inhabitants of the municipality they represent might constitute an indicator of the fashion in which they evaluate their political performance in managing the town's problems. Not surprisingly, the unrestrained enthusiasm of the members of the Municipal Council in Olešnica transpires in the evaluation of the satisfaction felt by inhabiting the town: an impressive 47.05% of the councillors feel very satisfied living in Olešnica and another equally impressive 52.94% declare they are satisfied inhabiting the town⁴⁰. Actually, the entire Council concentrates around

⁴⁰ See Figure 6: *The Local Political Elites' Level of Satisfaction with the Living in their Town*, the comparative graphical representation of the results of the administered questionnaire (Q15) on the municipal councilors of the three communities.

higher degrees of satisfaction of living in Oleśnica. This enthusiasm is unparalleled by any of the other two cases: although the members of the Councils in both Tecuci and Česká Lípa show high levels of satisfaction as inhabitants of their communities (fairly satisfied is characteristic for 58.82% of the councillors in Tecuci and for 72.72% in Česká Lípa), cumulatively it is the Municipal Council of Oleśnica that accounts for the highest percentage of very satisfied elites in respect to the outlook of their community. Comparatively, there is no councillor to be very satisfied of living in Tecuci and a feeble 4.54% very satisfied of being part of the community in Česká Lípa; the degree of satisfaction of inhabiting Oleśnica is more than ten times higher than that in the Czech case. In the case of the Local Council of Oleśnica, there is also an almost unnoticeable difference between those very satisfied and those fairly satisfied (5.89%), whereas in the case of Česká Lípa and Tecuci, the difference impressively climbs at 68.18% and 58.82%, respectively. A reasonable proportion of dissatisfaction in respect to being an inhabitant of the town is inherent within the Municipal Councils of Tecuci (29.41% of the councilors) and of Česká Lípa (22.72%); the Romanian case further displays a sentiment of profound dissatisfaction among the elite inhabiting the town (11.76%), in contrast to the other two cases, in which no such strong dissatisfaction is encountered within the elite groups. The strong satisfaction of the Polish local elite towards inhabiting the town and towards the conditions, advantages, benefits and privileges the town can offer is intimately correlated with their assessment of the positive direction in which the town is heading and with their evaluation of their own political performances in crucial, focal areas and sphere of competence at the local level (e.g. public improvements, infrastructure, healthcare, education, cultural & youth & sports activities, social services and public security). Moreover, the confidence and the enthusiasm of the local political elites in Oleśnica are revelatory for a dynamic community. There is also some form of local pride among the members of the Municipal Council that nurtures in this enthusiasm, a propensity towards localism and immediate proximity that stresses on the achievements and the accomplishments the community registered through local governance after the initiation of the decentralization process after 1998.

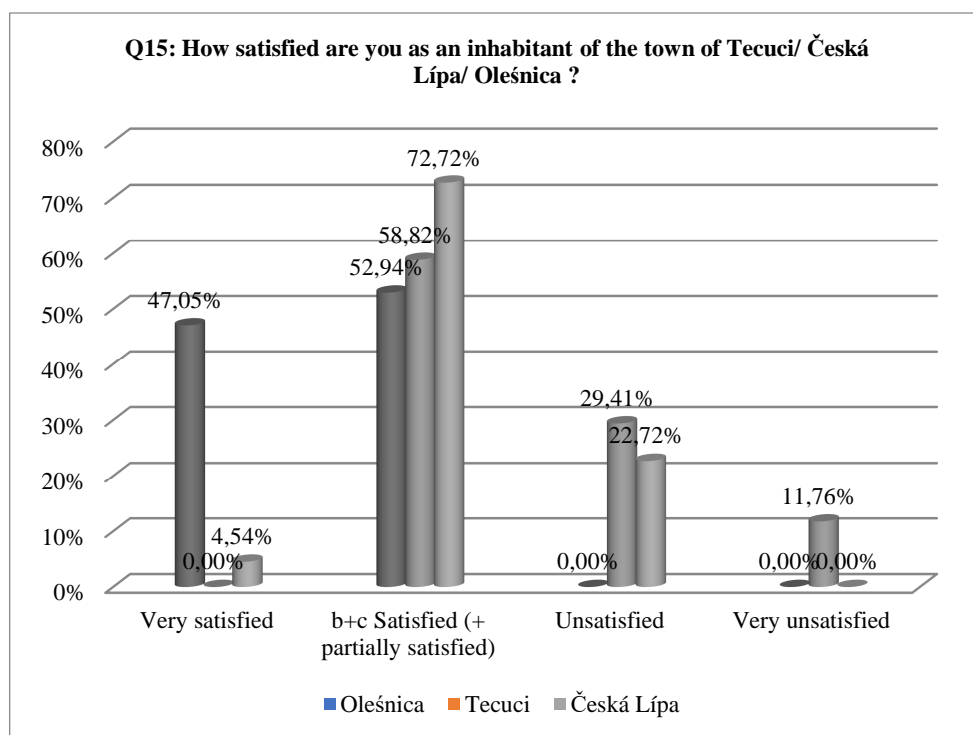


Figure 6. The Local Political Elites' Level of Satisfaction with the Living in their Town.
 Source: Results of the administered questionnaire; author's own collected data.

A TENTATIVE TYPOLOGY OF LOCAL ELITES FACING DECENTRALIZATION

Three types of local political elites appear distinct from the study of the Municipal Councils in the three case-studies. Quite clearly, the different levels, types and experiences of decentralization in East-Central Europe have generated seemingly different “elite outlooks”, different strategy prioritization, different manners of interaction with other groups, etc. For better accounting for the future research and for the resulting differences among the cases, this paper advances a threefold classification of local political leadership, constructed employing mainly two explanatory trajectories, one of the being discussed at some length here: (a) the level of administrative-fiscal decentralization specific for each country under scrutiny, and (b) the “legacy” of the former communist

regime, expressed through the type of “elite political culture”⁴¹. Thusly, the study favours the differentiation among three types of elites, underpinned on the specific content of elite political culture and on the set of attributions provided by a certain degree of decentralization (See the Annexes): (1) “predominantly elitistic” (e.g. Tecuci), (2) “democratic elitist” (e.g. Česká Lípa), and (3) “predominantly democratic” (e.g. Olešnica)⁴². The logic of this distinction is that different levels of decentralization and the specific inheritance of the *ancien régime* influence the gap between the elites and their constituencies, creating specific types of local “elite distinctiveness”.

CONCLUSION

Clearly, the level and the manner of decentralization process undertaken in each of the three East-Central European countries (Romania, Czech Republic, and Poland) have generated different outcomes in the local elites’ attitudes, prioritization, and interactions. More significant levels of administrative and fiscal decentralization indicate a more responsible, pragmatic local elite, though largely isolated to the central authorities and skeptical, cautious, regarding the adulcorated image of the benefits of decentralization. Conversely, a low level of decentralization is prone to determine an elite who is prepared to acknowledge political responsibility only for those “soft” spheres of policy-design and implementation at the local level; they seem impotent to act effectively locally in such domains as economic and infrastructural development, for instance. Yet, the impact of decentralization on the “impoverishment” of small-to-medium-sized towns – as are those studied here – remains an open question, worthy of proper and comprehensive consideration.

The envisaged study proposes a more encompassing approach, extended to the cases of other countries of former Sovietized Europe (Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia), employing the tentative typology proposed by the paper, hence further testing its validity. The features, definitions and types of decentralization differ greatly from one instance to the other. It is particularly this diversity that entails differences in the local “elite (general) outlook”, i.e. its attitudes, priorities, value orientations, interactions, profiles, degree of representativeness, patterns of recruitment, etc. Indeed, the contention this paper advances refers precisely to the impact of the degree of decentralization upon the general portrait of the local political elite. Three such impacts are discussed

⁴¹ Kenneth Jowitt, “The Leninist Legacy”, in Vladimír Tismăneanu (ed.), *Revolutions of 1989*, Routledge, London & New York, 1999, pp. 207-223; Stephen E. Hanson, “The Leninist Legacy and Institutional Change”, *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 28, no. 2, July 1995, pp. 306-314.

⁴² Cf. Roxana Marin, “Democratic Elitism...cit.”, pp. 29-56.

here, namely the impact of the level of decentralization on: (a) local elite's interactions, (b) local elite's attitude towards decentralization itself, and (c) local elite's satisfaction with the life in their town. Nevertheless, these differences in the local elite's "outlook" in East-Central Europe cannot and should not be traced back to the level of decentralization alone. Due to the limitations of this study, other, equally important, independent variables explaining the variations for the selected cases, are not considered (e.g. the "legacy of the former regime" and different "elite political cultures"⁴³, patterns of recruitment, the "system" variables, such as the characteristics of the political and the party systems, the tradition of "decentralization", etc.), variables which remain instrumental in accounting for the results. The paper acknowledges also other significant limitations, such as: matters of representativeness and significance in the case selection (the actual limits of "the most similar systems" research design); the shortcomings in generalization and statistical analysis, due to the small number of units of analysis; the limits of comparison, due to the actual relevance of the selected cases, and those sprung from the employ of the questionnaire as the main method of data collection; the operationalization of "decentralization" using exclusively one indicator, etc. While being aware of the important limitations, this endeavor might contribute significantly to the existing literature on the effects of decentralization on the portrait of the local leadership in East-Central Europe. Further research on other countries and regions undergoing processes of decentralization or democratization (e.g. Latin America, south-east Asia, India, etc.) might add a comparative note on the present endeavor.

⁴³ Kenneth Jowitt, "The Leninist...cit.", pp. 207-223.

Annexes

A Typology of Local Political Elites in East-Central Europe

I. Type of local political elite: “predominantly elitistic”;

- level of decentralization: low;
- type of local government system⁴⁴:
 - (1) vertical power relations⁴⁵:
 - (1.a.) “mixed”⁴⁶;
 - (1.b.) “Southern” hybrid⁴⁷;
 - (1.c.) the “clientelistic/ patronage model” (“support”)⁴⁸, the “market-enabling model”⁴⁹;
 - (1.d.) the “Central-East European type”⁵⁰.
 - (2) horizontal power relations:
 - (2.a.) accentuated “dualistic”⁵¹;

⁴⁴ The legislation to be considered for the three case studies was: Law No. 215/2001 on Local Public Administration, for Romania; the 1990-1994 legislative series – Constitutional Act No. 294/1990 Col.; Act of the Czech National Council No. 367/1990 Col. on Municipalities, amended as 410/1992; Act of the Czech National Council No. 425/1990 Col. on District Offices, the Regulation of the Sphere of Their Activities; amendments to Acts of the Czech National Council No. 266/1991, No. 542/1991, Act No. 21/1992, Act No. 403/1992, Act No. 152/1994 and Act No. 254/1994 –, for the Czech Republic; and Law of March 8, 1998 on Local Self-government, for Poland.

⁴⁵ One might raise the criticism that fitting the three East-Central European cases of decentralization into the existing, Western-typed typologies is a rather procrustean task, since such cases are rather “hybrid”, “catch-all” ones (see, for instance, Pawel Swianiewicz, Adam Mielczarek, “Parties and Political Culture in Central and Eastern European Local Governments”, in Gabor Soos, Violetta Zentai [eds.], *Faces of Local Democracy: Comparative Papers from Central and Eastern Europe*, Open Society Institute, Budapest, 2005, pp. 13-78). However, the present attempt is founded on the need for particularizing the three cases and tentatively pinpointing the discrepancies between them.

⁴⁶ Robert John Bennett, *Territory and Administration in Europe*, Frances Pinter, London, 1989; *Idem*, “European Local Government Systems”, in *Idem* (ed.), *Local Government in the New Europe*, Belhaven Press, London & New York, 1993, pp. 28-47.

⁴⁷ Edward C. Page, Michael J.F. Goldsmith, *Central and Local Government Relations: A Comparative Analysis of Western European Unitary States*, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills (California) & London, 1987; Peter John, *Local Governance in Western Europe*, Sage Publications, London & Thousand Oaks (California), 2001.

⁴⁸ Mike Goldsmith, “Local Government”, *Urban Studies*, vol. 29, nos. 3-4, May 1992, pp. 393-410.

⁴⁹ Hubert Heinelt, Nikolaos-K. Hlepas, “Typologies...cit.”, p. 27.

⁵⁰ Joachim Jens Hesse, Lawrence J. Sharpe, “Local Government in International Perspective: Some Comparative Observations”, in Joachim Jens Hesse (ed.), *Local Government and Urban Affairs in International Perspective. Analyses of Twenty Western Industrialized Countries*, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, 1991, pp. 603-621.

⁵¹ Hellmut Wollmann, “Urban Leadership in German Local Politics: The Rise, Role and Performance of the Directly Elected (Chief Executive) Mayor”, *International Journal of*

- (2.b) “consociational”;
- (2.c) the “semi-presidentialism” (“dualism” + “consociationalism”, with majoritarian traces)⁵².
 - the “legacy” of the *ancien régime*: “patrimonial”, “modernizing-nationalizing” communism;
 - degree of (geographical) isolation: significant, still low at elite level;
 - strategy prioritization: culture, social services, public improvements + low political responsibility;
 - patterns of recruitment: intramural selection; the dominance of national/ regional selectorates;
 - attitudes towards decentralization: unrestrained enthusiasm;
 - attitudes towards democracy: “statists-anti-egalitarianists”; “populists”;
 - quality-based profile: “ethical” + “political” models;
 - level of “elite distinctiveness” and representativeness: high, but standard level of passive representativeness.

II. Type of local political elite: “democratic elitist”;

- level of decentralization: standard;
- type of local government system:
 - (1) vertical power relations:
 - (1.a.) “fused”;
 - (1.b.) “Northern”-styled;
 - (1.c.) the “economic-development model” (“partnership”), the “market-enabling model”;
 - (1.d.) the “Central-East European type”.
 - (2) horizontal power relations:
 - (2.a.) moderate-to-weak “dualistic”;
 - (2.b.) “majoritarian”;
 - (2.c.) hybrid “presidentialism” (“dualism” + “majoritarianism”), with “parliamentarian” tendencies.
- the “legacy” of the *ancien régime*: “bureaucratic-authoritarian”, “welfare” communism;
- degree of (geographical) isolation: high, including at elite level;

Urban and Regional Research, vol. 28, no. 1, March 2004, pp. 150-165; *Idem*, “Local Government Reforms in Great Britain, Sweden, Germany and France: Between Multi-Function and Single-Purpose Organizations”, *Local Government Studies*, vol. 30, no. 4, Winter 2004, pp. 639-665.

⁵² Henry Bäck, “The Institutional Setting of Local Political Leadership and Community Involvement”, in Michael Haus, Hubert Heinelt, Murray Stewart (eds.), *Urban Governance and Democracy. Leadership and Community Involvement*, Routledge, London, 2005, pp. 65-101.

- strategy prioritization: social services, culture, public safety + high level of political responsibility;
- patterns of recruitment: intramural selection; the autonomy of local selectorates; localized political movements, mergers, splinters;
- attitudes towards decentralization: general approval, but realistic (reserved) stance;
- attitudes towards democracy: “statists-egalitarianists”; “democrats”;
- quality-based profile: “ethical” + “pragmatic” models;
- level of “elite distinctiveness” and representativeness: pondered by high level of dedication to the community; very low passive representativeness.

III. Type of local political elite: “predominantly democratic”

- level of decentralization: standard;
- type of local government system:
 - (1) vertical power relations:
 - (1.a.) “dual”;
 - (1.b.) “Northern”-styled;
 - (1.c.) the “welfare-state model” (“social empathy/ sensitivity”), the “market-enabling model”;
 - (1.d.) the “Central-East European type”.
 - (2) horizontal power relations:
 - (2.a.) accentuated “dualistic”;
 - (2.b.) “consociational”;
 - (2.c.) the “semi-presidentialism” (“dualism” + “consociationalism”, with majoritarian traces)⁵³.
- the “legacy” of the *ancien régime*: “national-accommodative”
- degree of (geographical) isolation: high
- strategy prioritization: public improvements, culture, education, social services + high political responsibility;
- patterns of recruitment: extramural selection;
- attitudes towards decentralization: cautious enthusiasm;
- attitudes towards democracy: “statists-egalitarianists”; “populists”;
- quality-based profile: “pragmatic” model;
- level of “elite distinctiveness” and representativeness: low, with significantly low passive representativeness, pondered by “social sensitivity”.

⁵³ *Ibidem*.